

## May being 'constantly updated' on holiday in Wales

PRIME Minister Theresa May is taking a short walking holiday in Wales, Downing Street has said.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said she was keeping in close touch with events in Syria while she was away.

"It is mostly a walking holiday. The Prime Minister is making calls and being constantly updated," the spokesman said.

On Sunday evening, Mrs May spoke by telephone with Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau to discuss last week's US missile strikes on a Syrian airbase.

The two leaders voiced their support for the American action describing it as an "appropriate" response to the "barbaric" use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime.

No further details of the Prime Minister's holiday were released by No 10.

Meanwhile, more than half of voters think Mrs May would make a better prime minister than Jeremy Corbyn as the UK enters challenging negotiations on withdrawing from the EU, a new poll has shown.

Analysis of the impact of Brexit by former Tory donor Lord Ashcroft



➤ Theresa May and her husband Philip in Dolgellau on the weekend after they attended a Palm Sunday Service at St Marys Church

Erfyl Lloyd Davies Photography

found Mrs May had a 37-point lead over the Labour leader, as 55% of respondents preferred Mrs May as prime minister compared to Mr Corbyn (18%).

In a further blow to Mr Corbyn's leadership, only four in 10 (38%) Labour voters chose him over Mrs May while 89% of Conservative voters backed their party leader.

The poll of more than 10,000 UK adults revealed people were closely divided over whether leaving the EU would make the UK better off (42%) or worse off (40%).

Nearly half (45%) of voters, including more than one third of Remain voters, said the Tories best represented their view of how the UK should handle Brexit and what the

UK's future relationship should be.

Voters of all parties favoured prioritising immigration control over access to the single market by 42% to 34% and Leave voters by 66% to 13% in favour of controlling immigration.

Brexit was seen as the most important issue for the country as a whole by both Leave and Remain voters, however only 39% of respondents

said the EU negotiations were one of the top three issues for their families compared to the NHS (58%) and the cost of living (53%).

Tory voters were the most likely to stick with their party regardless of how they voted in the EU referendum, with 83.8% of Tory Leave voters and 76.6% of Remain voters planning to back the party again.

# Carwyn predicts tough fight to hold on to gains in May ballots

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**C**ARWYN Jones has launched Welsh Labour's local election campaign, admitting it will be tough to hold on to the gains the party secured in 2012.

Labour has overall control in 10 of Wales' 22 local authorities, having improved its position from running just four councils between 2008 and 2012.

The First Minister told candidates and activists at the launch event for the May 4 elections in Newport on Monday: "We will run this campaign on the basis that we are an honest party with promises that we deliver on. Last year [at the Assembly election] people asked why should they vote Labour and we said we had made promises and kept all those promises.

"It's the same in councils up and down Wales, where Labour councillors have made promises that they have delivered on.

"We know we've had seven years of austerity. The Tories said to us there



➤ Welsh Labour leader Carwyn Jones

needs to be a period of austerity to balance the books... we're still waiting, seven years on.

"As we've seen cuts year after year after year from the Tory government in London, we've seen Welsh Labour councils and indeed the Welsh Government trying to deliver services despite those cuts - and we've done it."

Mr Jones said more was being spent on social care in Wales than elsewhere, and he claimed educa-

tion standards were rising, councils were delivering for small businesses across Wales and council tax was £171 lower per head than in England. He added: "One thing I'm really proud of is that we're now seeing councils building council houses across Wales, making sure that we have the right level and right numbers of social housing across our nation."

Mr Jones said the Conservatives would claim Labour should make more cuts, while simultaneously "promising the earth" with uncoded promises that would cost millions of pounds, which they could not deliver.

He claimed that despite the financial challenges arising out of cuts imposed by the Conservatives at Westminster, Labour had never abandoned its principles.

"We stand for fairness, we stand for justice and for opportunity because we are at the end of the day the party that represents working people," he said. "We have our roots in communities that suffered so much under the Tories in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the people who destroyed our communities are now

in Ukip, claiming they are the voice of the working people.

"But they're the people who supported Thatcher in the miners' strike, they're the people who supported the loss of steel jobs that we saw in the 1980s - and now they claim to be representing our communities up and down Wales."

Mr Jones said that above all, Labour offered people a fair deal, making sure they had the services they need despite the austerity imposed by the Conservatives.

He said: "Where there are difficult decisions, a Labour council will look first at protecting the interests of the most vulnerable before taking those decisions."

The First Minister acknowledged it was going to be hard for Labour to hold on to the seats it won in 2012.

"It was hard last year," he said. "I turned up in Bridgend to my count and the first question I was asked on the TV was when I was going to resign because we were going to lose loads of seats. But we didn't."

"Do you know why? Because we worked hard delivering messages that people understood.

"We knocked on doors, we spoke to people, we listened to people's concerns and we saw the result last year."

In the May 2016 Assembly election, Labour lost just one seat - to Plaid Cymru leader Leanne Wood in Rhondda.

Asked about cuts to school budgets in his home borough of Bridgend, Mr Jones said the funding of individual schools was based on the number of pupils they had. If the number of pupils fell, the budget would go down because it was based on an allocation per pupil.

Commenting on the large number of Independent candidates across Wales, some of whom are former Labour councillors, Mr Jones said: "If you vote for a political party, you know what it stands for, but if you vote for Independents you don't know what they stand for."

"We are able to say to people, if you vote for us you know what you're getting, if you vote Independent you've no idea how they might vote in certain circumstances, and you don't know what their principles are."